

Wayback Beta: Testing with First Time Users

Findings from July, 2016

Overview of Findings

The good

- Most first time users could see themselves using the Wayback Machine again, primarily for research.
- More technically advanced users enjoyed the Explore graph and were pleased to be able to explore the captures by event type (major and minor changes, 404's, redirects, etc).
- Users enjoyed the 'type to search' feature on the search bar, although most users also expected to see a separate result page.

The not so good

- First time users, especially those with limited technical expertise, had trouble deciphering the terms used on the Explore graph, and were unsure of how the graph related to the website they had searched for. Even for more advanced users 'minor' vs. 'major' changes was unclear.
- New users had a hard time understanding what the Wayback Machine was or how it could be used and needed more guidance around the potential uses of and limitations of the system.
- The look and feel of the Wayback logo and UI felt dated to users.

High-level themes

- New users had a hard time understanding what the Wayback Machine was or how it could be used. Some users thought that it was a search engine, others imagined it was a suite of developer tools and many did not understand the difference between captures and screenshots.
- Users needed more guidance and feedback from the system. Error messages, long loading times and general issues with navigation were frustrating for users. Users wanted more information about the depth and breadth of a capture (which links in the capture work? which days are available?) and very few users were able to correctly read redirect or error pages. Users also needed more guidance in deciphering the Explore and Capture page graphs.
- The look and feel of the Wayback Machine, especially the logo and homepage design, was distracting to users and lead some users to feel as though the site was untrustworthy.
- The global Archive.org navigation bar was confusing and distracting for users. The navigation bar often led users to believe that searches could be filtered by media type.

15 new users recruited from Usertesting.com performed 6 tasks on Wayback Beta through an unmoderated session.

The goals of the sessions were to determine:

- Can the user successfully decipher what tasks can be accomplished using the Wayback Machine? Do they understand what the Wayback Machine is?
- Can the user successfully locate the search box on the Wayback homepage?
- Can the user successfully navigate to an 'Explore' page? Once there, can the user correctly interpret the UI elements on the 'Explore' page?
- Can the user successfully navigate to a 'Capture' page? Once there, can the user understand the information presented on the 'Capture' page?
- Is browsing through capture history both on the 'Explore' and 'Capture' pages easy to understand or execute?
- Is the structure of information easy for users to understand?
- Is the Wayback Machine enjoyable or frustrating to use?
- How can the interface be improved? Where are the toughest pain points?

About
the Test

Dive-in to
the Sessions

[Watch the sessions on UserTesting.com](#)

Tests occurred from July 21 - 25, 2016

Users were recruited from the US, UK and Canada

Homepage

- The 'universal' Archive.org navigation bar was confusing to many users who assumed that the icons on the navigation bar could be used to filter the Wayback Machine by media type. One user also accidentally used the search box for Archive.org and was lead away from her task.
- Many users had a hard time deciphering what the Wayback Machine is or how they could use it from the information presented on the homepage. A number of users assumed it was a search engine.
- The carousel of historical webpages was one of the first elements that users noticed when visiting the homepage, however users generally had a hard time deciphering the purpose or utility of the thumbnails.
- The logo felt 'outdated' or 'untrustworthy' to some users.
- The Archive-it and Tools text attracted the attention of the majority of users, however this text lead some users to believe that the Wayback Machine was a subscription based product or a suite of developer tools.
- The word 'citation' in the Save Page Now text lead nearly a third of users into having a different view of what the site could be used for (eg. personal storage of citations)

Results Page

- Overall, users enjoyed using the 'type to search' feature in the search bar, and were impressed by not needing to hit 'enter' or click a button to submit their search.
- Users wanted more information about each of the presented results, and were unsure of what the text in the right column represented. Users generally wanted to know the URL, website title, information about the website and if information related to capture scope or the most recent capture. Users did like being able to have a thumbnail of the website.
- Some users were overwhelmed by the amount of search results and were unsure of which was the most relevant or best result based on their query.

Explore Graph

- The majority of users did not expect to see a graph after selecting a result. A spark graph for each result on the result page or additional information related to captures might help to prep users for the Explore page graph.
- New users, especially those without technical expertise had a hard time deciphering the labels on the Explore graph. Users who were able to understand what the majority of the graph labels meant still had trouble differentiating between minor and major changes. Additional language around the labels via a tool tip would help users better understand and utilize the Explore page graph.
- Users had a hard time differentiating between a 'screenshot' and a 'capture' and many only clicked on 'screenshots.' One potential reason for user's attractions to screenshots was the thumbnail that appeared on hover for screenshots. Additionally less than half of users noted the metadata text that appeared on hover over all captures.

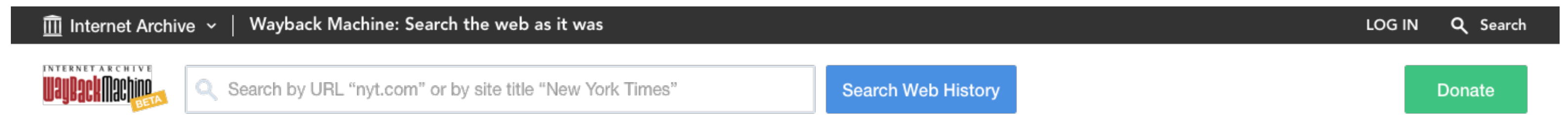
Capture Page

- Users with less technical expertise tended to find the Sparkline graph on the capture page easier to use than the Explore page graph, as it was simplified and made it easier for users to focus on selecting a specific date. Additionally, however, most users were unable to select the specific date they intended to select using the Sparkline.
- Only one user correctly identified the Sparkline graph as representing the overall number of captures
- Users were unsure of when the page had finished loading, especially in cases where some media could not be rendered.
- Some users thought that the capture was a 'screenshot' and did not appear to see the hyperlinks in the loaded capture page. Those who did notice the hyperlinks were very skeptical of if the links would work.
- Users liked having the search box on the capture page, unfortunately many users were unable to properly format their query (URL).
- Users who attempted to navigate back to the Wayback beta site by clicking on the Wayback logo on the capture page were sent to a petabox error page.

Navigation Bar

The global Archive.org navigation bar was confusing and distracting for users. The navigation bar often led users to believe that searches could be filtered by media type. The exposed search box also caused problems for some users.

Recommendation



A Minimal Approach to a Universal Navigation Bar

Create a minimized, breadcrumb based navigation bar to connect all of the Internet Archive's domains would allow for users to continue to explore and discover the many projects that are a part of the Internet Archive without creating a navigational bias towards Archive.org domains. The goal of this design is to place the navigational focus primarily on UI elements related to the Wayback Machine, while still allowing for free movement into Archive.org's holdings.

Key Insights
and Findings
Continued

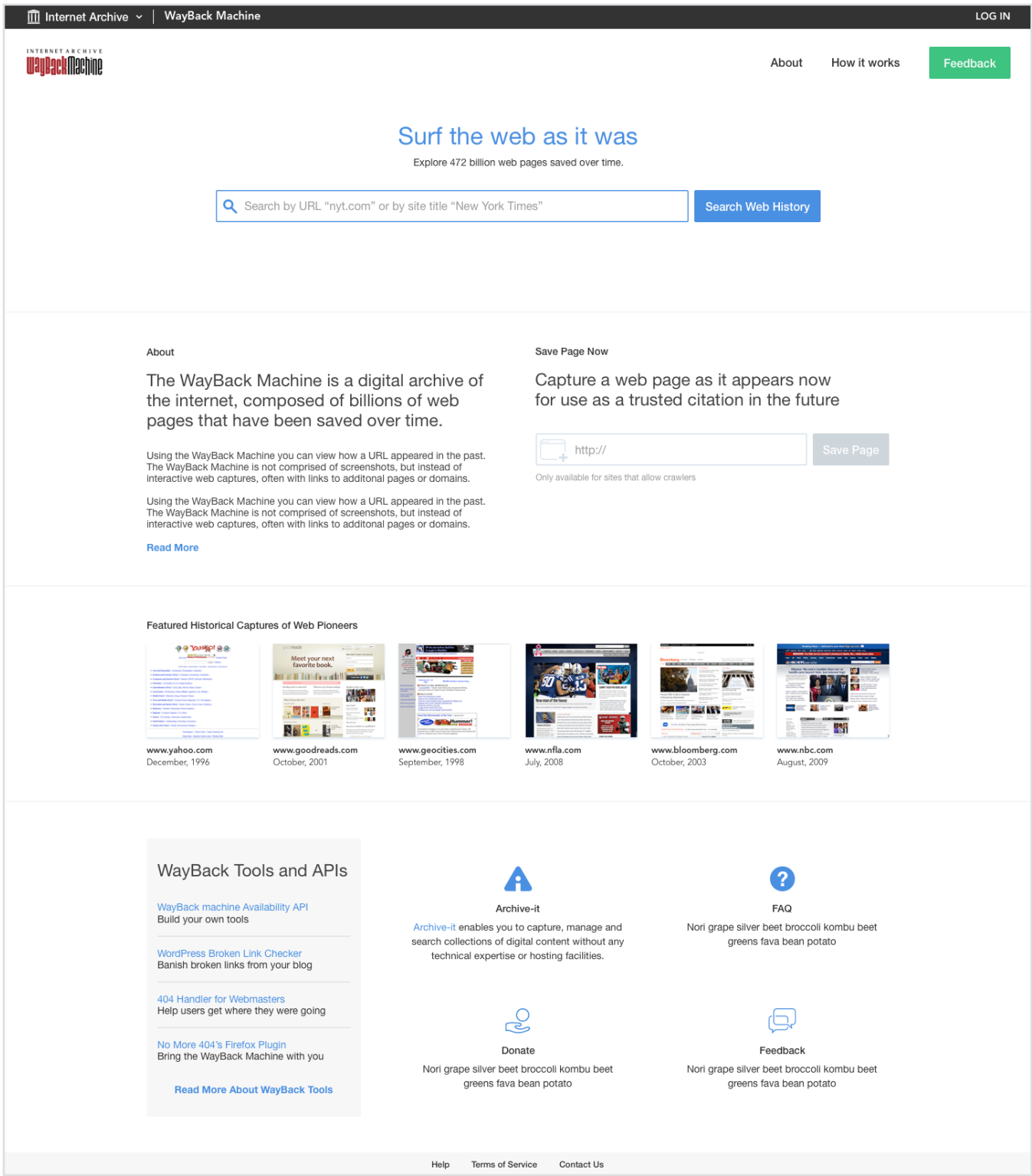
Homepage

Users had trouble deciphering what the Wayback Machine was from the homepage, were often distracted by the Tools and Archive-it sections and found the Wayback logo to be distracting or a sign of untrustworthiness.

Recommendation

Placing an emphasis on the search bar as well as some short, textual introductions to the Wayback Machine could help to set user expectations of the Wayback Machine as well as help users figure out how to utilize the website.

Additionally, advanced tools and services would be located lower on the page and deemphasized.

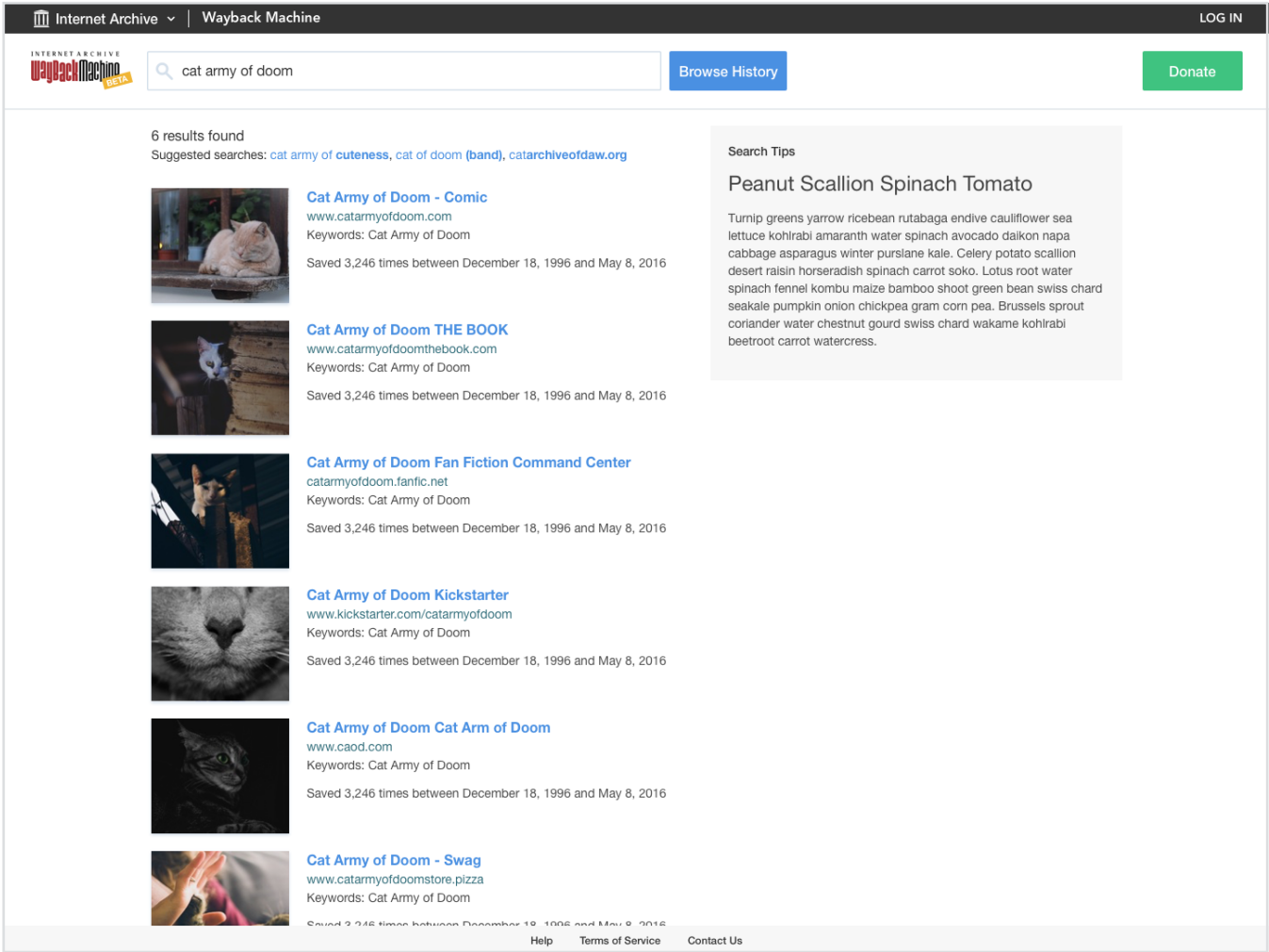


Grouping Information on the Homepage

Presentation of Results

Many users wanted more information about each of the results in the result list, primarily: URL, website title, description and an overview of capture information (capture range, last capture).

Recommendation



Expanded Results

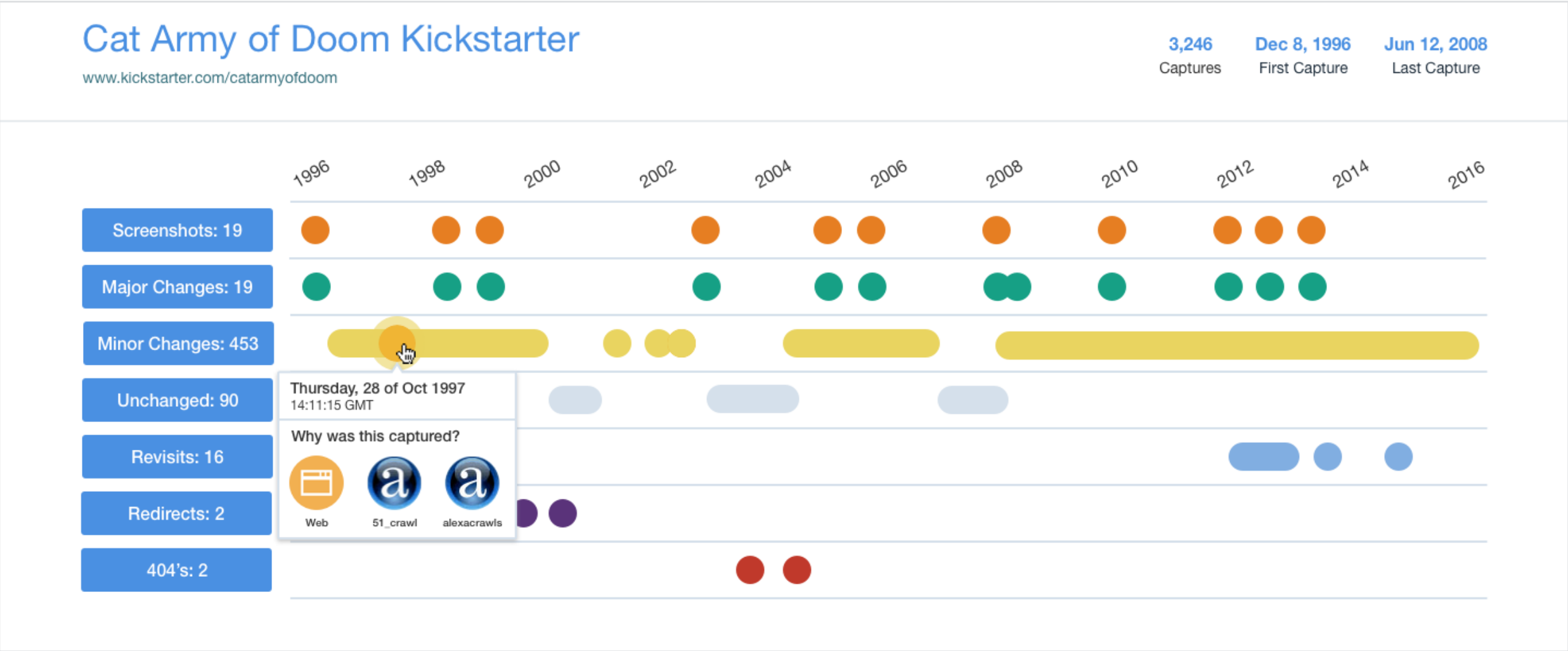
Creating a ‘result page’ where results were expanded upon to include the website’s title, URL, thumbnail keywords and an overview of capture information in a format reminiscent of popular search engines would help users to determine which of the results is most relevant to their search. The addition of a mini-sparkline might also help prep users for the Explore page graph.

The type to search could function as Google.com currently functions.

Explore Graph

Many users had trouble deciphering the Explore graph and were unsure of how to use the graph to learn about their query or locate a specific capture of the website they searched for.

Recommendation



Updated Graph with Added Information on Hover

Adding additional information related to the graph both in a header and throughout the graph itself could help users learn the elements of the Explore graph more rapidly. Hovers would be added to explain the graph labels and highlight specific captures upon hover.

Feedback from the System

Users had a hard time understanding many of the error messages they encountered while using the Wayback Machine (robots.txt, 504 errors, etc). Additionally, users were often unsure of if a page had completed loading or if their next selection was beginning to load.

Recommendation

Increasing the amount of 'human-friendly' information in error messages, as well as a redesign of the error message pages to fit the updated look and feel of the Wayback Machine would help users feel empowered to read error messages and therefore differentiate between bugs and restrictions set by a domain due to robots.txt.

Adding additional feedback from the system (progress bars or loading indicators) could help relieve user frustration. A way to express that a capture is loaded in its entirety would help users understand that some media might not be available in a specific capture. Additionally hover information related to which links in a capture are 'live' could entice users to spend more time exploring captures.

Questions, comments, or concerns?

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me on Slack,
in person or by email at carolyn@archive.org